



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes - **Draft**

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise, Representatives Karin Adams, Scott W. Aument, Sr., Joseph Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Susan Chase-Hildebrand, Michael Collins, Christine Conley, Susan Deane-Shinbrot, Luanne E. DeMatto, Nancy Driscoll, Dave Ferreira, Neal Gardner, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Karen Hatcher, Keith L. Hedrick, Conrad F. Heede, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Jim Loughlin, Jackie Massett, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe Merritt, Scott Newsome, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Betty A. Prochaska, Pam Ryley, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Richard Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, Lori A. Watrous, Amanda L. Whewell and Ivy R. Williams

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

REGULAR MEETING

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

28 members were present, and a quorum was declared.

The Moderator reported that Reps. Ferreira, Hedrick, Johnson, McDermott, Whewell and Williams notified the Town Clerk of their absence.

Members Present: Moderator Ambroise, Rep. Adams, Rep. Aument, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Conley, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Hatcher, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Massett, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ryley, Rep. D. Semeraro, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. R. Semeraro, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Watrous

Members Absent: Rep. Baril, Rep. Chase-Hildebrand, Rep. Ferreira, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Heede, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swindell, Rep. Whewell and Rep. Williams

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant School Superintendent Sean McKenna, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 8, 2012

A motion that the minutes be approved was made by Rep. Pasqualini, seconded by Rep. Adams.

The vote to approve the minutes carried 22 in favor, 6 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Bauer, Cerf, Harrell, Hatcher, Sebastian and Steinfeld.)

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

None.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Financial report

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of August 31, 2012 is approximately \$9.3 million. The General Contingency balance appropriated for FYE2013 is \$450,000; a transfer of \$5,600 to the Southeastern CT Probate Court has been approved by the Town Council. The Capital Reserve balance is \$1,476,077. The Town Manager noted that the increase is attributable to the close-out of projects that were completed in FYE2012 and those that met the five-year limitation rule.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager highlighted various items from the Town Manager's News. He announced the appointment of Mark T. Berry as the new Director of Parks and Recreation. He congratulated Chief Crowley on the achievement of the Town Police Department which placed first in the Connecticut Law Enforcement Challenge. The Department is now entered into the national competition.

The Manager stated that a letter from City Mayor Marian Galbraith that provides a report on the progress on the Thames Street project is attached to the Town Manager's News.

Mr. Oefinger reviewed the unaudited financial results for FYE2012. He noted that \$500,000 is expected to be returned to the General Fund. He stated that lower expenditures in Town Operations and less revenue affect the final amount that is being returned to the General Fund.

In response to Rep. Sebastian's remarks requesting a detailed report of the exact individual account savings from Town Operations and the Board of Education, the Moderator cautioned Rep. Sebastian to maintain decorum.

The Town Manager provided basic information on the federal education reimbursement that the Town receives due to the impact of the Navy Base. He stated that there are significant delays to receiving the projected revenues estimated in the annual budget. Mr. Oefinger noted that approximately one-third of Groton students are connected with the military. He stated that reimbursement levels are significantly lower for military children living in private housing. He noted additional problems associated with the recent privatization of military housing units and the effect on the annual reimbursement to the Town. He confirmed that Groton receives no reimbursement for non-military children living in the privatized military housing units and that the housing units are tax exempt.

In response to Rep. Sebastian's comments, a POINT OF ORDER was raised by Rep. Massett that questions and comments should pertain to the Town Manager's report.

The Moderator directed Rep. Sebastian to hold his concerns regarding matters unrelated to the Manager's report for Other Business.

G. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Moderator Ambrose introduced Assistant School Superintendent Sean McKenna. Mr. McKenna provided an update on the consolidation process for the middle schools, interior renovations to Cutler and West Side, the status of the new portable classrooms, completion of work at Mary Morrison elementary school, and the replacement of the S. B. Butler boiler. Mr. McKenna reviewed administrative positions that were replacements due to attrition and identified one eliminated position. He stated that no new administrative positions were added to any bargaining unit.

The Moderator cautioned Rep. Kotowski that her comments should pertain to Mr. McKenna's report.

In response to Rep. Aument, Mr. McKenna stated that he will keep the RTM informed on the final cost for middle school renovations and the new portable classrooms. His report noted that the project is \$240,000 under budget, but he expects that some change orders will be necessary.

POINT OF ORDER was raised by Rep. Massett that Rep. Cerf's questions concerning administrative salary wage increases do not pertain to the report by Mr. McKenna.

The Moderator concurred with the POINT OF ORDER and noted that Rep. Cerf can ask her

questions under Other Business.

A MOTION TO APPEAL the decision of the Moderator was made by Rep. Kotowski. There was no second.

*Democratic Floor Leader Patrice Granatosky requested a caucus at 8:10 p.m.
The meeting resumed at 8:24 p.m.*

In response to Rep. Hatcher, Mr. McKenna addressed the review process that is under way by consultants Milone & MacBroom to provide a comprehensive report to address the racial imbalance in Groton's school system and how consolidation impacts this issue. He stated that the initial portion of the report is available on the Board of Education's web site and that further information is being evaluated. He confirmed that an extension has been requested from the State in order to develop a complete report to identify the steps necessary for the Town to achieve compliance with State regulations.

H. LIAISON REPORTS

None.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE - Chairman Granatosky

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Ferreira

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Hedrick

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION - Chairman Streeter

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman Pasqualini

Chairman Pasqualini read the minutes of the meeting held on August 22, 2012. (Minutes are attached to the permanent record.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Pasqualini, seconded by Rep. Driscoll and so voted unanimously.

2012-0244 Police Department Overtime

Request for an Accounting of Overtime Expenditures for Town Police Department

This matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Collins

No meeting, no report.

2012-0245 Recent Increase in Landfill Fees

Recent Increase in Landfill Fees

Discussed

Moderator Ambroise reported that no quorum was present at the committee meeting and that only Chairman Collins was present. He reminded the members that it is their duty to make every effort to be present at scheduled committee meetings and to inform the chair and the Town Clerk if they are unable to attend. He noted that another meeting will be scheduled.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Massett

Chairman Massett reported that no additional committee meetings were held since her report at

the August 8, 2012 meeting. She noted that the committee's proposed changes were provided to each member in this month's agenda packet.

2012-0198

Review of RTM Rules

REVIEW OF RTM RULES (Sec. 3.8, Sec. 6 and Rules as a whole)

A motion was made by Rep. Massett, seconded by Rep. Granatosky, that this matter be Adopted as Amended.

The Committee recommends the following changes to the RTM Rules:

In Rule 9.2, insert the words "to make motions or " in the last sentence before "vote."

Change Rule 6.2.5 to read as follows: "Each RTM member, including the Floor Leaders of the two major political parties shall be on at least one, but no more than two standing committees, with the exception of the Moderator. The Moderator and the Floor Leaders shall be ex-officio members of all standing committees, but shall not have the right to make motions or vote."

In Rule 8.1, replace the word "may" with "shall" in the first sentence.

Change Rule 5.1 to include "Report of Superintendent of Schools" and "Budget Discussions" under Order of Business.

Town Clerk Moukawsher noted a clerical error in the proposed changes to Rule 8.1; the word "may" should have been struck and replaced with "shall".

A MOTION TO AMEND the recommended change to Rule 6.2.5 was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded by Rep. Pasqualini. Rep. Granatosky noted that the proposed new language was distributed to members prior to the meeting. She proposes replacing the existing language as follows: "Each RTM member shall be on at least one, but no more than two standing committees, with exception of the Moderator. The Moderator shall be an ex-officio member of all standing committees. The Floor Leaders of the two major political parties shall be ex-officio to all committees where they are not a regular member. Ex-officio members may participate in discussion but shall not make a motion or vote."

Moderator Ambroise clarified that Floor Leaders could vote at meetings of the committees to which they are assigned as members.

The vote on the amendment to the recommended change to Rule 6.2.5 carried unanimously.

Rep. Cerf suggested a clerical correction to Rule 9.2. The word "to" should be inserted in the proposed change to read, "the right to make motions or to vote." The Town Clerk noted that this change will be made.

Chairman Massett voiced her concern about the permanent addition of Budget Discussions as an agenda item.

A MOTION TO AMEND the committee's recommendation regarding Rule 5.1 to insert "Adjournment" as the last item under Order of Business was made by Rep. Barnhart, and was seconded.

The vote on the amendment regarding Rule 5.1 carried unanimously.

Members discussed amending Rule 5.1 to add "Budget Discussions" as a permanent item on the agenda.

Discussion ensued on the definition of conflict of interest in Rule 8.1. The Moderator and Chairman Massett both noted that this is addressed in the Town Charter and in Rule 8.1.

The Moderator acknowledged that the revised RTM Rules as amended and approved will be distributed with the next monthly meeting packet.

The motion carried unanimously

8. CONSOLIDATION - Chairman Pasqualini

No meeting, no report.

J. OTHER BUSINESS

Rep. Sebastian expressed concern about garbage trucks driving on the wrong side of the road and weaving back forth when collecting garbage.

Rep. Sebastian requested a referral to the Town Council to establish a Charter Revision Commission to look into a budget referendum to allow taxpayers to approve the Town budget.

Moderator Ambroise stated that he will look into Rep. Sebastian's request and have a response at the next meeting.

Rep. Dana Semeraro submitted a request to the Town Manager signed by twelve RTM members requesting information on the policy for encumbering funds. The request calls for a list of the amounts of encumbered funds returned from each account to the General Fund effective June 30, 2012. It also includes a request for an accounting of the encumbered amounts remaining in each account and the reasons why they remain encumbered. Second, the request calls for confirmation that the limitation on encumbrances stated in the Finance Director's memo dated May 28, 2010 is still in effect.

Members discussed the receipt of an email concerning complaints about the Office of Planning & Development Services (OPDS). Both the Moderator and Rep. Massett noted that personnel issues are not within the scope of duties assigned to the RTM by the Charter. Members should refer citizens with personnel issues to the Human Resources Department.

The Moderator read Section 4.5 (Power of Initiative) of the Town Charter to clarify the issues that are granted to the RTM under this section.

2012-0158

Services Shared Between Towns

SERVICES SHARED BETWEEN TOWNS

In response to Rep. Hatcher's inquiry about the status of referral 2012-0158, the Moderator and Town Clerk stated that they will review the committee report and report back next month.

Other Business (continued)

The Moderator instructed Rep. Cerf to provide a written request for the specific BOE administrative and central office wage increases for which she would like a report.

Rep. Aument requested that the RTM invoke the Power of Initiative to create an ordinance that would allow approval of the budget as a whole, including the Education budget.

Rep. Conley strongly stated that this would violate the Town Charter and must be done by a revision to the Charter.

Reps. Steinfeld and Driscoll left at this time.

Rep. Dana Semeraro requested a referral to discuss shared services. Discussions should include the Groton Town Council and Board of Education as well as the Stonington Board of Finance.

The Moderator reiterated that a referral exists on this matter, but noted that he will follow up with the committee chair and review the minutes to ascertain the status of the existing referral and report back next month.

K. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:35 p.m. was made by Rep. Gardner, seconded by Rep. Collins and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk